

## CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of establishing a context of an interaction between a consumer and a business comprising the steps of:

storing historical interaction data between a consumer and a business, the historical interaction data regarding interactions between the business and the consumer;

receiving a communication from the consumer;

accessing historical interaction data regarding the consumer; and

processing the historical interaction data regarding the consumer in view of the received communication from the consumer to establish a context of the received communication from the consumer.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication from the consumer is received via any one of a plurality of access channels.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

obtaining interaction data from previous consumer to business interactions; and

the step of storing historical interaction data between a consumer and a business includes storing the interaction data from the previous consumer to business interactions in the historical interaction database.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

presenting the historical interaction data to the consumer.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of presenting the historical interaction data to the consumer includes providing the historical interaction data to the consumer in a consumer actionable format.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication from the consumer includes auxiliary data.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the auxiliary data includes consumer identification data.

8. A method of interaction between a business and a consumer comprising the steps of:

maintaining a database of past interaction data from previous consumer to business interactions;

receiving an interaction initiation from a consumer;

accessing past interaction data regarding the consumer from the database of past interaction data;

processing selective past interaction data regarding the consumer in view of the interaction initiation; and;

establishing a context of the interaction initiation based on the processed past interaction data regarding the consumer and the interaction initiation.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the interaction initiation is received via any one of a plurality of access channels.

10. The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

obtaining interaction data from previous consumer to business interactions; and

the step of maintaining past interaction data includes storing the interaction data from the previous consumer to business communications and interactions in the past interaction database.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

presenting the processed past interaction data to the consumer.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the step of presenting the processed past interaction data to the consumer includes providing the processed past interaction data to the consumer in a consumer actionable format.

13. A method of establishing context of an e-mail from a consumer to a business regarding an Internet site of the business, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an e-mail originating from an Internet terminal of a consumer, the e-mail having consumer identification data and consumer Internet session history data regarding an Internet site of the business;

accessing stored historical interaction data regarding the consumer based on the customer identification data;

reviewing the customer Internet session history data; and

determining a context in which to present a response to the e-mail based on the customer identification data, the customer Internet session history data, and the e-mail.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of:

producing a response to the e-mail based on the determined context.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the following step before the step of receiving an e-mail from a customer:

automatically generating a template e-mail on the Internet terminal of the consumer upon the consumer selecting an e-mail link on the business Internet site, the template e-mail including the customer identification data and the customer Internet session history.

16. The method to claim 15, further comprising the step of:

automatically invoking an e-mail program on the Internet terminal of the consumer in response to the consumer selecting the e-mail link on the business Internet site and providing the template e-mail to the e-mail program.

17. The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

obtaining interaction data from previous consumer to business interactions; and

storing the interaction data from the previous consumer to business interactions in a historical interaction database.

18. An apparatus for establishing a context of an interaction between a consumer and a business comprising:

a data storage adapted to retain historical consumer to business interaction data regarding a consumer;

means for receiving a communication from the consumer; and

a processing unit adapted to i) access the historical interaction data regarding the consumer upon receipt of the communication from the consumer, and ii) process selective historical interaction data regarding the consumer in view of the received communication from the consumer to establish a context of the received communication from the consumer.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising:

means for providing a response to the communication from the consumer based on the established context of the received communication from the consumer.

20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the means for receiving a communication from the consumer is operable to receive the communication from the consumer from any one of a plurality of access channels.